

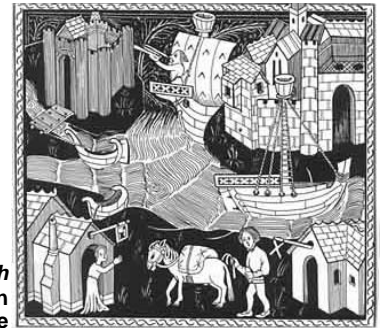
# Spring 2009 Students Question Students: *Old Master Drawings from the Ringling Museum of Art*

*Critical thinking questions authored by students to challenge fellow students to thoughtfully engage with the artwork presented in the exhibition.*

*By: Hannah Dahm, Casey Fisch, Cosette Lin, Jenna Mulberry*

1. Many of the drawings from the Ringling collection have a sketch-like or unfinished quality. All these drawings however, were meant to be preparatory. Note the drawing by Bernardino Campi which includes a photo of his finished painting for which the drawing was made. How does studying these preparatory works help us better understand the process of the old masters? Read the information with the Campi drawing which will shed some additional light on the business of art at that time. In what ways have our perceptions of preliminary drawings changed since then?

2. In several of the architectural drawings there seems to be a distinct vanishing point. Look at the drawing from an English manuscript illumination by an anonymous scribe from the Middle Ages. How did the new innovation of linear perspective set the old masters apart from their predecessors in the Middle Ages? How does the sense of space differ?



**Drawing, Middle Ages, English  
Manuscript Illumination by an  
Anonymous Scribe**

3. In this exhibition of the old masters there seems to be a few underlying themes: mythology, architecture, portraiture, and figure drawing. Why do you think these themes are repeated by these artists? In what ways have the artists incorporated classical themes into their artwork? Why would this be important?
4. After viewing the drawings, what do you think qualifies these artists as old masters? Consider the economy of line from the works by Charles-Joseph Natoire, *Bacchus*, Cardinal Francesco del Mont by Ottavio Leoni, *The Cascatelle* by Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi and *Portrait of a Nobleman* by Giovanni Francesco Barbier. What other techniques do you see displayed in these works? Consider shading and realistic rendering. Do you see any other techniques used?



*Bacchus*, Charles-Joseph



*Cardinal Francesco del Mont*, Ottavio Leoni



*The Cascatelle*, Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi



*Portrait of a Nobleman*, Giovanni Francesco Barbier

5. During the Renaissance, portraiture became a symbol of status. The rising importance of the middle class created a new market for commissioned portraits. How has portraiture changed over time and why do you think this is still an important subject matter in today's art world?
6. When looking at Jacopo Palma il Giovane's drawing, *Studies for a Resurrected Christ* a new appreciation for anatomical form can be seen. Why do you think this use of an idealized figure became so popular? Look at the drawing from an illustrated manuscript of the *Inferno*, 1350-1375 by scribes. Il Giovane's drawing shows a distinct departure from these previous spiritualized, and thus abstracted forms, of the Middle Ages.
7. Throughout this exhibition only two works by female artists are displayed. Given the limited



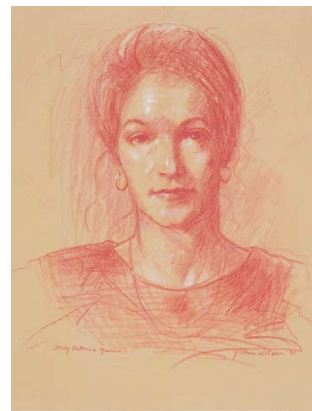
*Inferno*, 1350-1375, Illustrated manuscript by Scribes

opportunities and training for women at the time, how do you think these two artists became old masters? In what ways, if any, are their works different from the works of the male artists?

8. The old masters set a new precedent for art, such as idealized bodies and realistic portrait depiction. Why do you think these artists have impacted so many artists following them? In what ways can more recent movements be compared or contrasted to the Old Masters? For instance, look at *Femme Couchée* by Gustave Courbet (etching by Charles Waltner after Courbet's painting) and *Portrait Drawing of Katrina Garner* by J. Chris Wilson.



*Femme Couchée*, Gustave Courbet



*Portrait Drawing of Katrina Garner*, J. Chris Wilson

9. In the last century, much work was created by artists with the concept of “art for art’s sake.” The work by Arthur Deshaies downstairs in the Museum exemplifies this approach. When looking at work of the old masters, much of the influence would have come from the patron and not the artist’s creative ideas. In what ways would this have changed the outcome of the work? What characteristics of subject matter, medium, or style can be identified which mark these works as a type of commercial process?
10. Only a few works in the exhibition incorporate color. How does this affect our perception of the work as a *fine art*? In what ways does the lack of color enhance or take away from the overall experience of viewing the work? Would color distract from the appreciation of line or form in many of these works? Does lack of color seem to make the work also lack complexity and therefore value? Explain.